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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000325

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E AND AF/SPG
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER
CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ET](#) [SU](#) [AU](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: A/S FRAZER AND ETHIOPIAN PRIME MINISTER DISCUSS
FUTURE OF SUDAN

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 311 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. ADDIS ABABA 232 (NOTAL)

Classified By: ERIC WONG, DEPUTY POL-ECON COUNSELOR. REASON: 1.4 (B),
(D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Just prior to hosting the January 29-30 African Union Summit, at which the potential candidacy of Sudanese President Bashir to become AU Assembly Chairman likely dominated debate, Prime Minister Meles expressed concern about Sudan's future, particularly after authorities in southern Sudan conduct a referendum on independence. Meles attributed Khartoum's intransigence to its desire to frustrate the Government of Southern Sudan's likely secession. Meles observed that as Anglophone African countries were united in opposition to Bashir's candidacy for AU Chairmanship, targeting north African and Francophone countries was key. On Darfur, Meles expressed concerns about Eritrea's role in facilitating talks about Sudanese rebels. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) AF A/S Jendayi Frazer met January 27 with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who was accompanied by Personal Assistant to the PM, Gebretensai Gebremichael, and MFA acting Director General for Europe and America Almaz Ameha. Ambassador and deputy pol-econ counselor (note-taker) accompanied A/S Frazer. (NOTE: PM Meles Zenawi's comments on Somalia have been reported septel (ref A). END NOTE.)

KHARTOUM FEARS SOUTH'S SECESSION

[1](#)3. (C) PM Meles expressed concern about the future of Sudan, once a referendum was held to determine the status of southern Sudan. Khartoum's Government of National Unity (GNU) recognized that the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) would likely seek independence, and therefore sought to make secession "as messy as possible," Meles said. Southern Sudan could become a crisis, threatening to unravel progress made in Darfur. Meles said he sought U.S. perspectives on scenarios for Sudan 2-3 years in the future, involving either secession or unity with Khartoum.

[1](#)4. (C) Frazer responded that Khartoum's support for militias in Darfur showed it was not honorably committed to the

Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). She noted that GoSS President Salva Kiir had said that Khartoum would not accept an SPLM government, even if the SPLM won national elections. A recent Congressional hearing on policy toward Sudan had challenged the assumption that the GNU, having signed the CPA, could be engaged successfully. The U.S. position on southern Sudan would depend on the outcome of the situation in Darfur. GNU President Bashir was seeking a military solution: building up military forces in southern Darfur, and acknowledging bombing in northern Darfur, she said. The USG had revised economic sanctions affecting southern Sudan, in order to help it build capacity and promote trade southward through Kenya, rather than northward through Port Sudan. The USG was also assisting the GoSS with security sector reform and training, she said. Frazer noted the possibility of having the Director of National Intelligence conduct an assessment of Sudan's future.

FRANCOPHONE AFRICA KEY TO SELECTING AU ASSEMBLY CHAIRMAN

¶5. (C) Outlining U.S. concerns about the possibility of President Bashir serving as African Union Assembly Chairman, Frazer said the USG remained strongly opposed to his candidacy, but publicly had stated that it was up to the AU to decide its leadership. While Congolese President Sassou-Nguesso had not played a strong role as AU Assembly Chair, Nigerian President Obasanjo had, (i.e., leadership of the AU matters). The USG had no confidence in Bashir's leadership, and had asked former Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Ismail to advise Bashir not to seek the Chairmanship. The east African bloc needed to voice its objection and select an alternate (perhaps Tanzanian President Kikwete), or

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allow another regional bloc to assume the Chairmanship (such as Ghanaian President Kufuor for west Africa). Frazer said an Egyptian official had approached her to argue that Bashir should be given the Chairmanship in order to ensure the implementation of the November 2006 Addis Ababa agreement (on establishing a hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping force in Darfur); however, giving Bashir the Chairmanship would give Sudan control of two parts of the tripartite (Sudan-AU-UN) implementation mechanism.

¶6. (C) PM Meles said it was wise to avoid embarrassing President Bashir, and recommended that the USG work with France. As Anglophone Africa was united in opposition to Bashir, Francophone African states were key. France, due to its concern about Chad, may seek a quid pro quo with Bashir, Meles postulated. If united, defeating a combination of League of Arab States members and Francophone states could be a problem; targeting North African and Francophone countries was thus critical. Noting that the January 2006 AU Summit had decided that Bashir would assume the Assembly Chairmanship in 2007, Meles observed that it was thus necessary to reverse a previous Summit decision, which could prove more difficult than making a new decision.

CONCERN ABOUT ERITREA'S ROLE

¶7. (C) Meles recommended dissuading Eritrea from playing a role in Darfur, noting that while some Sudanese rebels remained in Asmara, they were "not eager" to be handed over to President Bashir by Eritrean President Isaias. Frazer responded that she had informed Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Raymond Johansen that Asmara-based talks with Sudanese rebels had no visibility or transparency, due to the exclusion of the international community. Talks under UN-AU auspices, led by AU Darfur mediator Salim Ahmed Salim and the new UN Special Envoy Jan Eliasson, were more desirable, she said, but Johansen had questioned whether rebels would accept Salim. Frazer noted that the jointly appointed Special

Representative of both the UN SYG and the AU would have overall responsibility for the political talks and peacekeeping force. She added that Eritrea opening a parallel track is undesirable but should feed into the AU-UN implementation structure.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: PM Meles's interest in the future of Sudan is likely motivated by strategic concerns, as Sudan is not only Ethiopia's neighbor but also one of its key suppliers of oil. Ethiopia's concern that it not alienate Bashir, for fear of driving Sudan politically closer to Eritrea, has been voiced by some of Meles's key advisors, such as State Minister of Foreign Affairs Tekeda (ref B). END COMMENT.

¶9. (U) A/S Frazer cleared this cable.
YAMAMOTO